

Hervé Cariou



Ancient Europe

A glossary

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Introduction

This essay presents a glossary of ancient populations that were Indo-European or adopted a proto-Indo-European language. It focuses on populations in Europe but interacts with others that didn't claim settlements on European soil.

The essay compiles ancient authors (in the light of current knowledge). These still hold some surprises. For example, many claim that the first conquerors of Western Europe, the Iberians and Pelasgians, only encountered men living in "caves" along the way.

Even if this glossary covers a lot of authors, we use two 'bases': Herodotus (and his *Histoire*¹) and Diodorus of Sicily (and his *Bibliothèque historique* ²). The latter spent many years compiling documents from the late Library of Alexandria (Egypt). Finally, we add a compilation work by Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville (1827–1910): *Les Premiers Habitants d'Europe*³.

1. Posthumous translation (1850) by Pierre-Henri Larcher (1726–1812)
2. Translation (1851) by Jean-Chrétien-Ferdinand Hoefer (1811–1878)
3. Les Premiers Habitants d'Europe (The First People of Europe), t. 1, with the collaboration of G. Dottin, Paris, Ernest Thorin ed., 1889, 2nd ed., 480 p. Les Premiers Habitants d'Europe, t. 2, Paris, Thorin et Fils ed., 1894, 2nd ed., 426 p.

Glossary

Ambrones

Archaeology suggests a geographical origin: northern Europe and more precisely the Ems, a river that flows into the North Sea between the Rhine and Elbe. This origin is related to their alliance with the Cimbri, the Teutons and the Tigurins. That said, Plutarch specifies that the Ligurians were called Ambrones themselves.

Arimaspi

According to Diodorus, *'The nation of the Scythians grew considerably under famous kings who left their name to the Saka (Sacae), the Massagetae, the Arimaspi and several other tribes'*. Jubainville specifies that *'The Arimaspi are the Scythians that Pytheas found on the banks of the sea beyond the Rhine'*.

Assyrians

According to Diodorus (in his time), Ninus remains the first known Assyrian ruler. He allied himself with Arieus, the ruler of the Arabs (*'strong men'*), and attacked a neighbouring country: Babylonia. The *'untrained'* Babylonians paid tribute. Then Ninus marched on Armenia, ruled by a certain Barzanès. The latter submitted and the magnanimous Assyrian ruler demanded only auxiliary troops. Then, he marched on Media, led by Pharnus. Although the latter had a *'considerable'* army, desertions caused his loss and he was *'put on the cross'*. Finally, Ninus will make himself master of all Asia, except for the Indies and Bactria. Ninus then withdrew to his lands and founded the city of Ninus (which the Medes razed to the ground when the Assyrian empire fell).

The ancient authors remain discreet about the origin of the Assyrians. Jubainville defends the Semitic thesis by relying on the name of their supreme god: Ilu says Assur. That said, the Egyptians called them *Routonou* and point to an Indo-

European language (future Ruteni of Gaul and/or future Slavic Ruthenia?). Archaeology knows that the city-state of Ashur became independent again in the 21st century BC. It also knows that its first-known character (two centuries earlier) is named Ititi. We note the correlation with Hittite. That said, Nesha (present-day Kültepe), the first Hittite city, would appear six centuries later in Anatolia.

In a more recent record, Diodorus mentions *‘the help sent by the Assyrians to the Trojans’*. Then, he adds that *‘Priam, king of Troy, and subjected to the king of Assyrians’*. Finally, he specifies that *‘the empire of the Assyrians, which is of all the empires that lasted the longest’*. According to Ctesias¹, this empire lasted thirteen hundred years. Jubainville refers to the same Ctesias to affirm that during the Trojan War, *‘The Assyrians had already been masters of Asia for more than a thousand years’* (present-day Near East). Indeed, Assur became independent one millennium earlier to free itself from the sovereigns of Akkad (empire of Sargon, 24th century BC).

1. Greek physician of the 5th before our era who practised in Persia and author of *Persica*, a treatise on the history and geography of Asia (present-day Near East)

Bactrians

Jubainville writes that *‘we see by the enumeration of the army of this famous king of the Persians that the Saka, Persian name of the Scythians, and the Bactrians were united under the authority of the same governor’*.

The origin of the Indo-European Bactria, in Asia, remains uncertain. Diodorus specifies that the first known Scythian dynasty, that of the Assyrian conqueror Ninus, marched on Bactria, the capital. Ninus married the defeated ruler, the legendary Semiramis, the *‘most famous of all women’*. She can’t refer to the Assyrian Shammuramat (9th BC) because Ninus was born a thousand years earlier. Moreover, Diodorus confirms the sovereignty of Semiramis over Bactria. For the rest, he and Herodotus agree to underline the architectural work of this woman in occupied regions (Media, Babylonia).

Cappadocians

According to Herodotus, *'The Greeks call the Cappadocians Syrians. Before the domination of the Persians, these Syrians were subjects of the Medes'*.

Carians

According to Herodotus, *'The Carians had passed from the islands to the continent; they had been formerly subjects of Minos: they were called Leleges'*. He also evokes the Cretan tradition which contradicts him: *'here is what the Cretans tell about the Carians: these think differently about their origin. They say that they were born in the continent itself, and believe that they never bore any other name than the one they have now. They also show in Mylases an ancient temple of Jupiter where they admit only the Mysians and Lydians, because of the affinity which they have with these people. They say, indeed, that Lydus and Mysus were brothers of Car'*. Still according to Herodotus, Lydus (Lydos), son of Atys (and thus a member of the Atyads dynasty) was descended from Manes, legendary ruler of Meonia which will shelter the future Lydia.

Chaldeans

According to Diodorus, the Ancient Libyan ruler Belus sent settlers to Babylon on the banks of the Euphrates. The priests of these settlers remained exempt from taxes and from any public office (like the Egyptian priests). The locals, impressed by the observation of the stars practised by these priests, gave them the name Chaldeans. As the locals didn't differentiate between the Libyans and the Egyptians, confusion reigned afterwards about their origins. Diodorus adds that *'the Chaldeans are the oldest of the Babylonians'*, forgetting that they were sent to... Babylon. That said, if one considers an Akadian etymology, *bāb-ili(m)* or *bāb-ilāni*, i.e. the 'Gate of God' (Gods), the original site could have been a place of worship. Finally, the surrounding area may have housed only pastoral populations.

Later, in Babylonia, the Chaldeans *'form a class in the state like that of the priests in Egypt. Instituted to exercise the worship of the gods, they spend all their life meditating on philosophical questions'*. Finally, *'The Chaldean philosophy is a family tradition; the son who inherits it from his father is exempt from any public office'*. That said, this Chaldean 'philosophy' doesn't prefigure Greek humanism and remains rooted in theology. Nevertheless, we note a concept that foreshadows the notion of infinity: *'The world is eternal in its nature, it has never had a beginning and it will have no end'*.

Cimbri

The Cimbri, gifted with a Herculean strength (according to Herodotus), devastated the Roman Republic before the Romans finally eradicated them. According to Posidonius, they were related to the Cimmerians and authors (Strabo, Diodorus and Plutarch, specifically) will rally to this thesis. According to Claudius Ptolemy, they resided on the shores of the *'peninsula of the edge'* (current Denmark).

Cimmerians

According to Herodotus, they had resided on the shores of the Sea of Azov (Black Sea) before the Scythians expelled them. He tells of their flight and specifies that some went up the Danube. Then they disappeared for centuries. Posidonius resurrected them by supporting a relationship with the Cimbri. Ptolemy locates them in the current Denmark. Between the Sea of Azov and Denmark, we go up the Danube, we cross Hercynian Forest and we go down the Elbe. If the Cimmerians wanted to put some distance between the Scythians and themselves, they succeeded. Other tracks to trace their original dispersion aren't lacking: Cambria, current Gumretsis of Armenia, Taurisci of Noricum (current Austria), Veneti of Armorica (current Brittany), Wends (eastern neighbours of the Germans and possible ancestors of the Venetians), certain Volsci, etc. One thing remains

certain: they fled from the Scythians and thus avoided eradication and/or assimilation.

Concerning their origin, Strabo considered them as Thracians, but at this point, he seems to be isolated among the ancient authors.

Colchians

Colchis refers to an ancient state, a kingdom, and later a Georgian region, which played an important role in the culture of Georgia. Herodotus writes: *‘It appears that the Colchians are Egyptians by origin, and I had assumed this before I heard of that’*. He adds *‘that the Colchians, the Egyptians and the Ethiopians are the only men who are circumcised’*.

Danes

We will consider the *Gesta Danorum* of the medieval author Saxo Grammaticus. According to his chronicle, everything begins with a certain Humble whose descendants will integrate Danes, Swedish, Norwegian, Saxon and Finnish dynasties. He will generate Angul and Dan. The latter will marry Grytha, venerated among the Teutons. All these names remain too recent and don't make it possible to link the Danes to a more ancient population (like the Cimbri, for example). In this gesture (chronicle), the first 'god' mentioned is Odin. However, Grammaticus is quick to point out that Odin *'was credited throughout Europe with the honour, which was false, of divinity'*¹. Our essay *Edda : Le "space opera" norrois* demonstrates that Odin, born Vodinn, belongs to the sixteenth generation of the Thracian Munon. Moreover, if we link the 'divine' couple Ódr-Freyja to the couple Odin-Frigga, two thirds of Norse mythology (the Vanr and Æsir pantheons) refer to a Thracian genealogy (and not a mythology).

Finally, Grammaticus doesn't mention any Dane mythology. The ancient Danes seem to share a viewpoint of the Cimmerians (future Cimbri?) noted by Plutarch:

they don't even believe in the existence of the sun. Did they develop a primitive atheism?

1. *The Danish History, Books I-IX by Grammaticus Saxo*, Oliver Elton (1861–1945). English translation published in 1905 of the *Grammaticus Gesta*.

Dardanians

For Jubainville, Dardanian and Thracian remain synonymous. One speaks about Thracians installed in Troad (Asia Minor). In this area, the Pelasgians of Troad preceded them. Then, Jubainville goes astray: '*After the Dardanians, otherwise known as Thracians or Phrygians, in Troad, the Masa were, with the Dardanians, allies of the Syrians against Ramses II, king of Egypt around 1400*'. He wrote these lines in the 1880s and Egyptology has progressed since then. Ramses II reigned between 1279 and 1213 (approximately) and didn't confront the Assyrians but the Hittites¹.

To complete the picture, our essay *Troia : L'Histoire de la Nouvelle-Troie* defends the foundation of a protohistoric society in Britain by Dardanian migrants.

1. The ancient authors don't know them by this name. We therefore assume that they refer to them as Syrians (to distinguish them from their Assyrian neighbours).

Etruscans

Dionysius of Halicarnassus remains convinced by the Italian origin of the Etruscan civilisation. The latter spoke an 'Italic' language, but a linguistic family doesn't trace a geographical origin. Jubainville draws attention to two events that preceded their appearance in Italy. We begin with the foundation of Ameria in 1135 BC (Cato the Elder). This city refers to the current Amelia in the Umbria region (Italy). We continue with the flight of the defeated Siculi towards Sicily in 1035. According to Thucydides (in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*), the Siculi '*originally*

settled in Italy’ were fleeing from the Opici (Umbrians). At that time, Iberian Siculi were already occupying Sicily.

According to current knowledge, these Opici participated in the first wave of Italian settlement with the Latins, the Ausones, etc. For Strabo, this first wave lived ‘*by villages*’. Clearly, it didn’t know the organisation in cities (a criterion of civilisation in the eyes of the Greek authors). As a result, at its foundation, Ameria could only claim the status of a village. Did a second Etruscan wave develop this site? Finally, Jubainville argues on the correlation between the flight of the Pelasgians from Greece (under the Hellenic pressure) and a Pelasgian migration towards the Italian peninsula in two waves: Umbrian then Etruscan.

Franks

Unknown to the ancient authors, the Franks claimed to descend from Sicambri of Pannonia. If we write Sic-Ambri, we note a semantic proximity to the Ambrones. That said, we could just as easily write Si-Cambri and get closer to the Cimbri. Published in 727, the *Liber historiae Francorum*, an anonymous work, describes a supposed Trojan migration. In summary, after the fall of Troy, twelve thousand Trojans led by Antenor crossed the river Tanais to settle in Pannonia near the Sea of Azov. This population founded the city of *Sicambria*. Then, two generations later, Sicambri were already travelling on the Rhine. This Antenor inspired many authors (propagandists?). For some, he settled in Cyrene (ancient Libya). For others, he led the Aeneti (future Veneti) to Thrace then founded Patavium (present Padua, Veneto). Can we conclude on the origin of the Franks? As the Frankish paganism is summed up in nothingness, it directs us towards the atheism of the Cimbri. On the other hand, the synonym Sugambri (and thus the common denominator Ambri) brings us back to the Ambrones. We propose a possible declension: Sugu-Ambri. In proto-Indo-European languages, *sugu* or *suku* designates kinship. In this case, the ‘Ambrones Franks’ are descendants of Illyrians and therefore of Thracians.

Getae

Jubainville notes: *‘The Getae, in the fifth century B.C., lived between the Hemus and the Danube. Later they crossed the Danube, and with the Dacians, one of their tribes, they settled north of this river. South of the Danube, west of the Getae, in the valley of the Morava, the Triballes were also Thracians. The Thracians extended westward to the Illyrians, a branch of the same family that reached the Adriatic’*. As a source, he evokes Ephorus (of Cyme) quoted by ancient authors (Strabo, Diodorus, etc.).

Goths

They claim a common ancestor: Gaut, son of Hafpi (and Huítastjerna) and grandson of Thjálfí. We note a semantic proximity to the chief of a Nordic pantheon: Thjazi, ancestor of the Vanir. To return to Thjálfí, his sister was named Roskva. According to tradition, this sibling descended from a peasant. She worked for a certain Thor, the son of Odin. As the latter stayed most often in Sweden, the Goths could be descended from natives of that country. However, the *Getica* (published in 551) by Jordanes, the first historian of the Goths, reports a primitive immigration led by Berig landing with three ships on Polish shores. The author goes even further: the Getae Zalmoxis will rule the Goths. To return to Berig, he came from Scandia. The latter, for the ancient geographers, designated several unknown islands ‘north’ of Britannia (Great Britain). Nowadays, it’s associated (reductively?) with Scandinavia. Jordanes dates the original landing: 2030 years before the Byzantine victory over the Goths. He’s probably referring to the decisive battle of Sena Gallica in the same year of the publication of his work (even if the conflict ended two years later).

The origin of the Goths thus remains uncertain and a Getae sovereignty can’t claim kinship.

Greeks

Homer, in the Iliad, to designate those who, under the leadership of Agamemnon, attack the city of Troy, does not use the word 'Greek' but alternates several names including Achaeans, Panacheans, Danaens, Argians or Panhellenes. Source: Wikipedia

According to Greek tradition, the Achaeans are descended from Achaïos, son of Xouthos, himself son of the hero Hellen. Then, the origin is lost in the limbo of mythology. Diodorus maintained that Zeus was only the terrible child of a Cretan family who imported metallurgy on the island. Then, this family took advantage of it to colonise continental regions (in Greece, specifically). So, this reinvigorates the Cretan origin of the Greeks. A problem still has to be solved: the priests of Egypt supported an Egyptian origin of the Cretans and the Greeks used an Indo-European language close to the Paleo-Balkan languages (formerly named Thraco-Ilyrian). One can decide in the following way: if Egyptian-Cretan speakers who write in hieroglyphs (or in 'linear') discover a (Thracian?) alphabet, one doubts that they cling to their figurative writing.

We can confirm the African origin of the Greeks with another name for the Achaeans: the Danaens. They descend from Danaus, son of Belus, the Libyan. In this case, the Egyptian and Hellenic traditions recovered what didn't belong to them.

Iberians

Jubainville considers that it *'Remains to be examined if the Iberians of Asia, mentioned, we believe, for the first time by Apollodorus, in the second century before our era are the same people as the Iberians of Western Europe. According to Strabo, it was necessary, in Iberia of Asia, to distinguish the inhabitants of the mountain from those of the plain'*. The latter *'wore the costume and share a*

similar way of life with the Armenians and Medes: those of the mountain resembled rather the Scythians, their neighbours, of whom they were related or with whom they had a common origin’.

Illyrians

Jubainville notes that the Ligurians, stemming from the Illyrians, *‘In concert with the Illyrians and Thracians, other members of the European family, would have preceded the Greeks-Latins-Celts in the conquest of the southern regions of Europe. Their first known war was against the fraction of the Iberians who bore the name of Sicani’.* About a Thracian population, he adds that *‘The Autariatae pushed their conquests to the Danube: Pannonia belonged to them. Appian gives us Pannonios for a son of Autarieus, son himself of Illyrius’.* This summarises the continuity between the Illyrians, *Autariatae* and Pannonians.

The current point of view is easily summarised: the Greeks attributed the name of Illyrians to all populations that they discovered in the North-East of Greece. For the rest, an Illyria appeared in the 4th century BC on the current territory of Albania.

Latins

It will be enough to specify that in ancient authors, the distinction between the Umbrian and the Latin remains very fine.

Lycians

According to Herodotus, the *‘Lycians originate from Crete and go back to the highest antiquity’.* Then, he specifies that those of Lycia (Asia Minor) *‘come from Crete and were called Termilai; but Lycus, son of Pandion, who was in Athens, gave them his name’.* More precisely, this Lycus, driven out of Athens, took refuge in Crete with these Termilai.

Medes

According to Diodorus, the Medes put an end to the Assyrian empire and destroyed the city founded by Ninus, the first Assyrian ruler known to ancient authors. Previously, Semiramis contributed to emancipate them. We know what happened next: Ninus invaded Bactria, married Semiranis (defeated) and perhaps attracted the wrath of the Medes. However, still according to Diodorus, the fall of the Assyrian empire was a Belesys project, the commander of the Babylonians, and of Arbace who commanded the corps of the Medes in... Nineveh (in the heart of the Assyrian empire). The war, interminable, will exhaust the forces in presence and the empire, thirteen centuries old (a record), won't recover.

The ancient authors remain discreet on the origin of the Medes. Pliny the Elder nevertheless specified that the Scythian Sarmatians descended from these Medes of 'Iranian' origin (the Persians share this origin). Herodotus reports that *'the Sigynnae carried, like the remainder of the Scythians, the pants of the Medes and Persians, and they had like them brought the use of it from the countries which were the common cradle of the Iranian race, the cradle of the Scythians as of the Medes and Persians'*.

It can be recalled that the present Iran remains one of the candidates for the geographical origin of Indo-Europeans. For example, in ancient times, Susiana (present-day Iranian Khuzestan) bordered on the north with Media and on the east with Persia. This Susiana, drained by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, developed very early exchanges with Mesopotamia (present-day Middle East). Thereafter, the Elamites integrated it.

Pelasgians

According to ancient authors (including Plato in his *Timaeus*), the first settlers of Western Europe, the Pelasgians and Iberians, only met 'savages' living in caves. According to the traditions, these Pelasgians are declined in Tyrrhenians (shores of the... Tyrrhenian Sea), in Umbrians or Etruscans of Italy, in Plishti (Philistines?)

or 'Curetes' of Crete, in Masa of Mysia (Asia Minor), in Takkaro of Macedonia, etc. According to Herodotus, at a certain time, Athens was a Pelasgic city. Scymnus of Chios goes further: the Pelasgians founded Athens. One meets a synonym: the 'Thurs'. Jubainville brings them closer to the Thurs of Germanic mythology. According to Thucydides, the Pelasgians – Thurs deserted Athens and took refuge in the peninsula of Mount Athos. According to Strabo, the island of Lesbos was named Pelasgia. Finally, Sophocles specifies that they also colonised the Peloponnese.

Jubainville defends the idea of a non-Indo-European origin because during their installation in Greece, they didn't control the manufacture of fabrics and especially, they didn't practise agriculture. A fragment of the Diodorus work preserved by the *Chronicle* of Eusebius (of Caesarea) associates them with Lydians: that thus creates a bond with the Maeonians. Finally, according to this chronicle, the Pelasgians '*dominated the sea*' (maritime navigation in the Mediterranean Sea) before the... Phoenicians and this, as early as the 12th century BC. Their earliest known settlement (according to tradition) was on the western shores of Asia Minor. That said, Herodotus specifies that Mysians and Teucrians crossed the Bosphorus to conquer the future Thracian territory. However, the Mysians and the Lydians remain related. Finally, the Hellenes (Greeks) and the Thracians will dominate the Pelasgians and will merge with them.

To conclude, Herodotus wonders about a relationship with the ancient Libyans. This could explain their maritime mastery and colonisation of Mediterranean shores. One can even think that the evolution of the Sahara desert¹ incited them to take the sea.

1. *Voilà 4 900 ans, le Sahara est abruptement passé du vert au jaune* (4,900 years ago, the Sahara abruptly changed from green to yellow), by Quentin Manguit, Futura, April 11, 2013

Phoenicians

They referred to themselves as Canaanites. The Egyptians of the 24th century BC knew the land of Canaan. That said, two theses confront each other. One considers the Canaanites as a distinct cultural entity. Another one supports an abstract grouping of several populations. Herodotus offers a clue: *‘The Phoenicians once lived on the shores of the Erythraean Sea¹, as they themselves say, but having passed from there to the coast of Syria, they settled there. This part of Syria, with all the country that extends to the borders of Egypt, is called Palestine’*.

1. Red Sea

Phrygians

We begin by quoting Herodotus: *‘The Egyptians believed themselves, before the reign of Psamtik, to be the oldest people on earth. This prince having wanted to know, at his advent to the crown, which country had the most right to this title, they thought, since that time, that the Phrygians were more ancient than them’*. He speaks of Psamtik I who reigned between -664 and -610. We dream: Egypt concedes its title of *‘Earth Dean’* to Phrygia. These Phrygians appear in history during the Hittite Empire collapse, towards 1200 before our era. They thus settle in Anatolia. Herodotus maintains that originally, they were neighbours with the Macedonians under the name of Briges (Bryges). According to Strabo, one speaks about a Thracian population established in Macedonia on the mount Bermios (current Vermio Mountains). That isn’t enough to claim precedence on the Egyptians.

Scythians

No population on Earth named itself ‘Celts’. This can also be seen among the ‘Scythians’. In their culture, a population used the name of the common ancestor to name itself. In this regard, we can recall a sentence of Diodorus: *‘The Nation of*

Scythians grew considerably under famous kings who left their name to Saces, Massagetae, Arimaspi and several other peoples. On their generic name, Diodorus enlightens us: *'According to the mythological traditions of the Scythians, a virgin was born among them, a daughter of the earth, having the body of a woman from the head to the belt, and the shape of a snake'* (Book II. 43). The Greeks thus linked her to Scythes, a hybrid monster from their mythology. Diodorus also tells us that they *'lived at first only in tiny numbers on the banks of the Araxes River, and enjoyed no consideration'*. The Araxes rises in the Armenian highlands and flows into the Kura, 120 km from its mouth on the Caspian Sea. Then the population explosion of the Scythians impresses to the point of occupying vast Eurasian plains, expelling the Cimmerians from the Sea of Azov and threatening the Medes and Persians.

In our essay *Scythia: The Amazing Origins of Ancient Ireland*, we demonstrate that several Scythian populations colonised Spanish Galicia, Ireland and Scotland. For example, the Gaels were descended from Scythian navigators.

Teutons

Jacob Grimm (1785–1863), a literary figure in Prussia, published *Deutsche Mythologie* in four volumes (posthumously in 1880–1888). According to him, the oldest known name for the supreme god among the Teutons is... Goth. He recognises that German and Gothic mythologies remain so intertwined that it's difficult to differentiate them. However, the geographical origin of the Teutons would be limited to Denmark. If this is the case, how do they share their mythology with Goths of the lower Vistula (Poland)? We could propose that this 'Dane' population converted to 'Gothism'. A few centuries later, the fact that they hastened to join Christianity may support this hypothesis.

Their allies, the Tigurini, Celticized Helvetians, bring a similar perspective. This supports Grimm's talk of connections between Celtic and Teutonic mythologies.

The Teutons seemed to absorb all the mythologies they discovered. As a result, it could also support their Dane, and therefore atheistic, origin.

Genealogy

As a picture is worth a thousand words, we summarise in trees our (non-exhaustive) glossary of populations. The first one summarises non-Indo-European populations. The second one focuses on Indo-Europeans. In the first one, the light blue (or light grey) indicates a population that didn't adopt an Indo-European language (or even elements of language). In the second one, the same colour indicates a population that didn't reside in Europe (no country, colony or settlement recorded). Finally, a dotted arrow only commits the author of these lines.



